

# *Documents on Diplomacy: The Source*

## *An Act Establishing a Department of Foreign Affairs* *First Congress, Session 1, July 27, 1789*

**SECTION 1.** *Be it established by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That there shall be an Executive department, to be denominated the Foreign Affairs, and that there shall be a principal officer therein, to be called the Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs, who shall perform and execute such duties as shall from time to time be enjoined on or intrusted to him by the President of the United States, agreeable to the Constitution, relative to correspondences, commissions or instructions to or with public ministers or consuls, from the United States, Or to negotiations with public ministers from foreign states or princes, or to memorials or other applications from foreign public ministers or other foreigners, or to such other matters respecting foreign affairs, as the President of the United States shall assign to the said department ; and furthermore, that the said principal officer shall conduct the business of the said department in such manner as the President of the United States shall from time to time order or instruct.

**SEC. 2.** And be it further enacted, That there shall be in the said department, an inferior officer, to be appointed by the said principal officer, and to be employed therein as he shall deem proper, and to be called the chief Clerk in the Department of Foreign Affairs, and who, whenever the said principal officer shall be removed from

office by the President of the United States, or in any other case of vacancy, shall during such vacancy have the charge and custody of all records,, books and papers appertaining to the said department,

**SEC. 3.** And be it further enacted, That the said principal officer, and every other person to be appointed or employed in the said department, shall, before he enters on the execution of his office or employment, take an oath or affirmation, well and faithfully to execute the trust committed to him.

**SEC. 4.** And he it further enacted, That the Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs, to be appointed in consequence of this act, shall forthwith after his appointment, be entitled to have the custody and charge of all records, books and papers in the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, heretofore established by the United States in Congress of the United States assembled.

Approved July 27, 1789

### *Source*

Global Legal Information Network, Library of Congress.

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